

The background is a vibrant collage of numerous icons and badges. Some icons include a trophy, a gear, a lightbulb, a bicycle, a globe, a magnifying glass, a recycling symbol, a person running, a satellite, a radio tower, a book, a gear, a globe, a magnifying glass, a recycling symbol, a person running, a satellite, and a radio tower. Some text labels include 'Supervis', 'AITD', 'L&D Project Management', 'BOOK WORM', 'LINCOLN', 'LEADERSHIP', 'Blended Learning Designer 2014', 'CAREER READINESS', and 'COMMUNICATIONS'.

BASICS

OF ESTABLISHING

A BADGING PROGRAM

“Digital badge” has become a new higher ed buzzword, but what does it actually mean and how can colleges engage students through badging programs?

Digital badges are a type of micro-credential that are searchable, shareable, and act as proof of a competency or achievement.

In higher ed, badging programs help students connect what they learn in class, in extra- and co-curricular activities, and through internship, Co-op, and employment experiences to the world of work!

Creating a meaningful badging program requires a bit of planning to make sure that students walk away with the tools they need to succeed in their next step.

But it doesn't have to be hard! We'll show you how you can easily develop a program that will impact your students for years to come!

What is open source badging?

Remember Foursquare? The local search-and-discovery mobile app encouraged users to “check-in” and share their location in exchange for digital rewards, trophies, and “achievement badges.” While business rewards programs can be traced back much further than Foursquare’s 2009 launch, the app was probably the most significant digitization and gamification of a rewards program.

In their early days, digital badges helped bring game-design elements (think video game challenges) to the real world as a way to keep customers, employees, and learners engaged. In addition to increased engagement, badges could also be exchanged for physical rewards or other incentives.

In 2011, The Mozilla Foundation created the concept of open badges as a way to standardize the issuing, collecting, and displaying of qualifications earned online. Digital badges became a way of not only keeping people engaged and rewarded, but also verifying knowledge, skills, abilities, and accomplishments. Open source badging helped ensure that those who earned digital badges did so by their own merit, by actively participating in events or learning through programs offered at companies, non-profits, and government agencies.

Today, evidence-based assessment has grown increasingly important in the world of work. The combination of changes in new hire expectations and training, the influence of the gig economy, and the rising number of remote employees has contributed to the need for hiring managers to quickly verify the legitimacy of competencies and achievements in a way that a standard resume cannot do. Digital badges offer hiring managers this ability with a few simple mouse clicks.

In higher education, badging programs supplement a student’s degree by helping them connect their experiences on-campus to those outside of the classroom, forcing them to think and apply the knowledge they gain from their college or university to real-world situations. An effective badging program can prepare students to enter the workforce by helping them understand how their experiences have helped them build the knowledge, skills, abilities, and accomplishments that they need to succeed after graduation.

What do I want my students to learn?

Competency Badge

Knowledge, skills, and abilities can be measured as competency badges. Examples include:

- NACE Career Readiness Competencies
- Ability to use a Graduated Cylinder
- Knowledge of the difference between oil and acrylic paint

A skill or ability can be demonstrated through projects and assessments to earn a competency badge.

Like any program, establishing a digital badging program should begin with the end in mind. Developing student learning outcomes will not only benefit the learner in the long run, but will also help you determine how to structure the overall program.

What knowledge, skills, abilities, or accomplishments do you want students to walk away with after participating in your program?

You should also consider how you “chunk” information for your students. You don’t want your students to feel overwhelmed by the amount of work they have to do for one badge. Breaking the program into separate parts by using multiple competency and achievement badges can keep your students engaged while ensuring they move through the entire program and gain the competencies and achievements you want them to.

Achievement Badge

Accomplishments can be measured as achievement badges. Examples include:

- Attending a career workshop
- Participation in a science fair
- Completion of a dance recital

Accomplishments can be simple or complex and achievement badges can be earned by participating in events or workshops.

PRO TIP

Determining whether you’ll award competency badges or achievement badges (or both!) will help you better develop your program.

How will I help my students learn?

Next, it's time to consider how your students will build the competencies or participate in the achievements you identified and whether you will be offering the content on your own or with campus or employer partners

Standalone Badge

A standalone badge is a single badge that represents one competency or achievement.

Some examples of a standalone badge include:

- An initial resume critique
- Basic understanding of Microsoft Excel
- A superior rating in a music competition

Pathway Badge

Pathway badges are learning or achievement programs where a series of chunks are linked together ...

... with the program potentially ending with one overall badge.

Pathway examples include:

- Mock interview process
- Mastery of multiple coding languages
- Adobe Creative Cloud Certification

Do your student learning outcomes require that learners interact with you or your office one time or multiple times? Will your students be interacting with any of your on-campus partners or with employer partners as part of the badging program?

In what ways will they be interacting?

(For example, by scheduling one-on-one appointments, attending workshops, checking in at events, or completing online activities.)

PRO TIP

Deciding between a standalone badge or a pathway badge influences the technology choices you will have to make for your program.

What do I want my students to do with their badges?

Think back to the student learning outcomes you outlined earlier. Do you want your students to take the knowledge, skills, abilities, and accomplishments with them at the end of your program, or at the end of their time at your college or university? Will your students be so proud of the badges that they earned that they'll want to share them with friends and family? Knowing how your students might share their badges can help you make technology decisions later on.

Some ways students are able to easily share their badges include:

· ePortfolio · Resume · Email · Handshake · LinkedIn · Social Media ·

What will my badges look like?

The look of your badges will help students get excited about your program!

PROGRAM ALIGNMENT

If you're planning a standalone badge program, the badge design might speak to the specific competency or achievement. If you are launching a pathway badge program, think about whether you'll want the badges to resemble each other and what design choices you'll make to signify to students that they are progressing through the pathway.

BRAND ALIGNMENT

If students will be showing off their hard-earned badges outside of your college or university on their social media profiles, ePortfolios, or resumes, then you may want to consider whether or not your badges look like they came from your school. Think carefully about the colors you use and if you incorporate any design elements from your school into the badge design.

Here are a few examples of the badges we used in our pathway program:



Each competency badge had the same design elements, but we changed the wording and color by NACE competency. The Career Readiness badge (at far right) is a pathway badge. It incorporates the color of each of the individual badges, showing completion of the program.

How will I design my badges?

Deciding how your badges will be designed is just as important as deciding what they will look like. If you have someone on your team with graphic design experience, they can create the badges for your program by following the guidelines below. If you don't have access to someone with this kind of experience, several of the open source badging platforms offer a random generator or badge builder. These functions are limited and can be time consuming, but can be a helpful way of getting a badging program launched without access to a graphic designer.

For those creating their own badges, follow the recommendations below:

- Know the acceptable image file formats for your badge service provider.
- Find the specifications for the suggested image size and viewbox shape.
- Use a transparent canvas, and do not add any background to the image file as students may use their earned badges in places without a white background. This means that any design elements outside of the badge will show up on an off-white resume or colored social media background.
- Before finalizing your badge design, ensure that elements can be clearly defined at a size as small as 90px x 90px. This is generally the smallest size a badge would be displayed online.

We've done some of the work for you! You should make sure that this information is still accurate for your service provider by checking their FAQ section before beginning your badge design.

	BADGR	CREDLY	OPENBADGES (GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS)
File Formats	PNG SVG	PNG JPG GIF	PNG SVG
Image Size	PNG 400px x 400px SVG Square viewbox	600px x 600px for all three formats File size limited to 2MB	PNG no smaller than 90px x 90px SVG Square viewbox
Random Generator or Builder?	Random Generator	Badge Builder	N/A

Where should I start with technology?

Now that you have answered a lot of questions about the way your badging program will be structured, it's time to seriously consider the technology you will use.

Your use of technology will vary depending on the type of program you are doing. For example, if you are creating a Standalone Achievement program, you'll need some way of measuring attendance or participation, and then a way to issue the badge. If you're doing a more complicated Pathway Competency program, you'll need to rely a little more heavily on technology.

MEASURING COMPETENCIES & ACHIEVEMENTS

Referencing a sign-in sheet for an event and creating a quiz in your school's LMS shouldn't be that difficult, but you will want to be aware of the amount of time it takes for staff to create and keep up with these types of measurements for your badges. There are some things you can do to save time, like using a module completion trigger in your school's LMS to automatically award a badge, but there are other things, such as giving personal feedback to students on ways to improve their essay, that take a little bit more time. It's important to think through how much time will have to be spent on each student for each badge before you begin your program so that you can find the right balance between automation and direct staff interaction while maintaining a high-quality program.

SHOWCASING COMPETENCIES & ACHIEVEMENTS

One thing to keep in mind as you develop your badging program is the end use for a student. If you ask your students to complete work toward a competency badge or do an in-depth project for a pathway badge, you will want to make sure that they have an easy way to showcase any artifacts from that work to future employers. For example, your students may have to create a video of their study abroad experience to earn an achievement badge or show you that they've mastered written communication by writing an essay. If this video or essay is "locked" into your LMS, future employers won't be able to see the hard work your students did to earn their badges! You may consider having your students add the work they do to a resume or portfolio as part of your program so that they can show the work they did to earn their badges with people outside of the college or university.

DEVELOPING RUBRICS NOW CAN SAVE YOU TIME LATER

When you first create your badging program, you may consider initially launching it to a few test groups of students to find and resolve any pain points. These test groups can also help you develop rubrics so that both the program administrator and the student participants know what is required for each badge within your program. This can be especially helpful if you require students to take multiple steps to earn a badge or if you have more than one person reviewing submissions before awarding badges. The most important thing to note about using rubrics is that the more rules you outline in the rubric, the less creative your students will be able to be. If you want to encourage creativity, try to give your students some guidance without telling them exactly what to do.

What exactly is an issuer and why is it important?

ISSUER

An “issuer” is the issuing authority who actually awards the badge. In most cases, this will be your department, college, or organization. The issuer will appear alongside every badge issued and is an easy way for a person who is viewing the badge of a student to see where it came from. The issuer also serves as a form of validation for the badge. In other words, if a hiring manager were to see a badge issued by “the University of South Florida,” that would carry more weight than if the badge was issued by “Pete Thorsett.”

Most technology platforms will require the following items to become registered as an issuing authority and there is no cost to become an issuer under the Open Badges framework.

- Organization Name
- Description of the Organization
- URL / Website
- Logo (or other identifying image)
- Email Address of the Issuer

VALIDATION

The ability to validate a badge is an important part of the badging process, especially when it is a competency badge. Validation is the process by which a third-party can check to see if the person presenting the badge (e.g. a student) is the actual owner of the badge and that it came from the correct issuer (e.g. your school).

Some platforms have a validation tool available for you to provide to third-parties for free (like Badgr), while others do not offer a validation tool at all. Be sure to choose a provider that offers this service, if students will be sharing their earned badges on sites like LinkedIn or on Handshake.

When setting up your issuing authority, you may want to consider setting up a special section of your website where you can post and share supplemental information about your badges and the badging program with third-parties. This supplemental information can help them understand the work that your students had to do to earn the badge, the extent of your badging program, and how your badging program is being administered.

PRO TIP

Set up a generic email account to use as your department’s issuing authority. This will ensure your program won’t be disrupted if a staff member leaves.

Which badging platform is best for my program?

All of the questions you've had to ask yourself over the last few pages have helped you get to this point. With some knowledge about what the program you're creating will ultimately look like, the student learning outcomes you want your learners to walk away with, and how you'll measure their progress in your program, you're ready to make an informed decision about which badge service provider you should choose.

BADGR - <https://info.badgr.io/>

Badgr is a great all-around badging solution. You can issue badges that you've designed, or use their random generator tool. It is easy to arrange badges by badge class, issuer, and author, and can help keep programs with a lot of badges organized. Badgr also has a tool for students called Badgr Backpack. Students can create a free account and access all of the badges they have earned in one location so that they can quickly share them with employers. Badgr has also recently released a program called Badgr Pathways for program administrators to create pathway badging programs with ease. There's also a mobile app and a pro version for Canvas to get in-depth insights into badge completion. You can do a lot with the free version of Badgr, but the advanced programs like Badgr Pathways and Badgr Pro for Canvas all come with price tags. You'll want to contact Badgr for pricing.

CREDLY - <https://credly.com/>

Credly can be a great tool for those who don't have a graphic designer. Its Badge Builder tools allows you to create badges using basic shapes, icons, and text. You can also upload your own icons, but uploaded icons must not be larger than 500KB. You can still upload your own badge designs if you have them, though. The free version of Credly gives you a lot of basic badging functions, but it does not come with a verified issue status. If your students will share their badges to external audiences like employers, a verified issue status will probably be important. You can opt to pay a \$150 annual fee for this with the free version, or you can look into pricing for Credly's premier and enterprise versions.

OPENBADGES - <https://openbadges.org/>

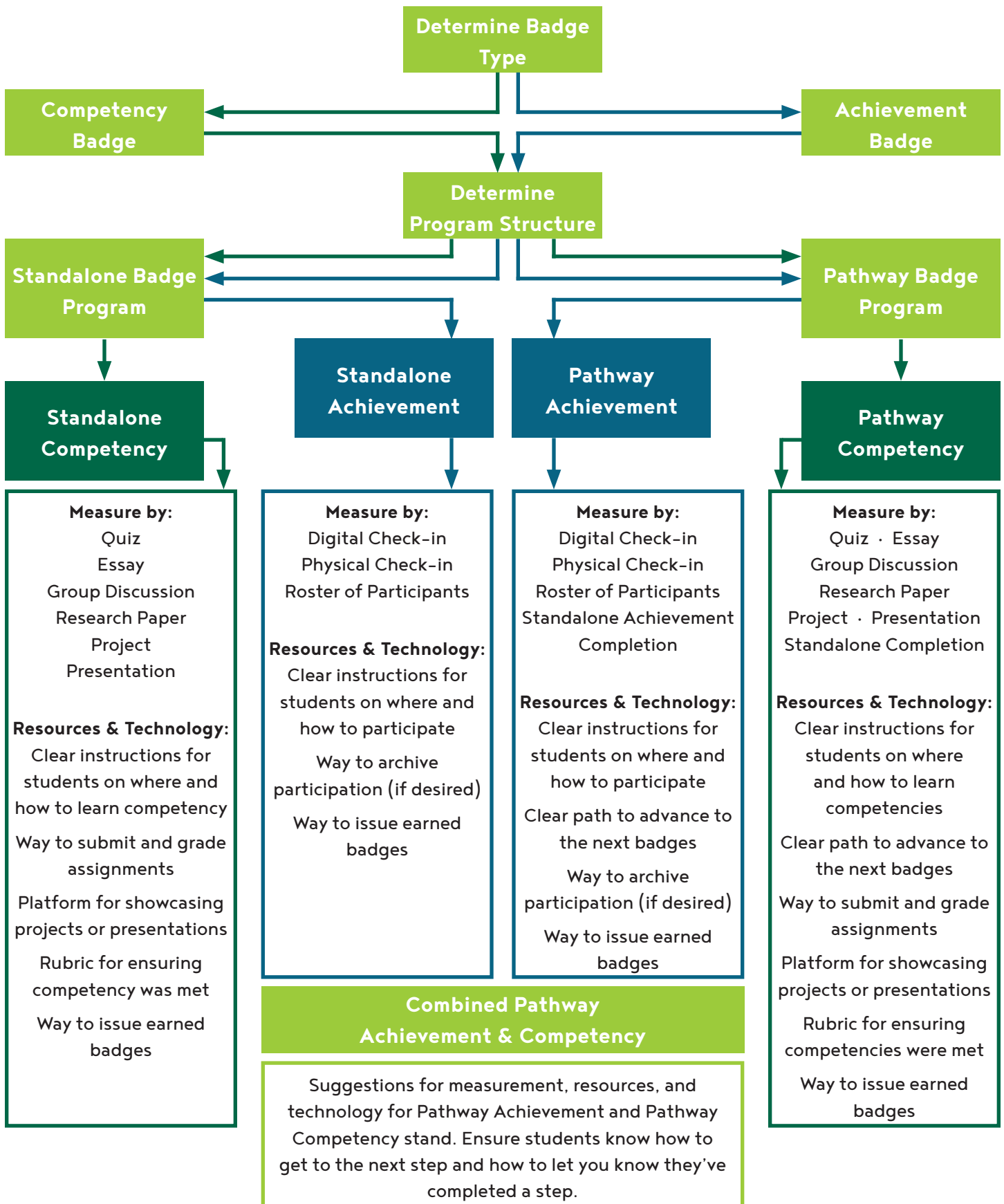
OpenBadges is not actually a badge service provider, but is instead a website dedicated to helping learners and administrators discover and understand open source badging. It has a list of other badge service providers that aren't mentioned here, and offers a lot of helpful information about building a badging program. The language is a little "techy," but they provide a dictionary to help you get started.

PORTFOLIUM - <https://portfolium.com/>

Actually an ePortfolio system, Portfolium has recently implemented badging pathways. Using the tool, you can add badges from any open source badging service provider, or upload your own directly to Portfolium. Anyone can create a free account on Portfolium to build their ePortfolio, and the company works directly with schools to provide in-depth insights and pathway badging programs for a fee.

How should I structure my badging program?

Follow the basic flow chart below for ideas on the resources and technology you may want to use to create and structure your badging program.



Basics of Establishing a Badging Program

SoACE Technology Bootcamp 2018

Katlyn Kurtz

Communications & Marketing Specialist

katlynk@usf.edu

Peter Thorsett

Director of Strategic Initiatives, Communications, & Research

pethorsett@usf.edu



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SoACE